

SCDNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
Minutes, July 11, 2012
Table Rock State Park

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Mike Hutchins, John Troutman, Billy Hoole, Charles Howard, John Gramling, II, Cleve Smith, Stan Halliday, III

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Milton Brazell, Paul Bennett, Bryson Thomason

STAFF PRESENT:

Emily Cope, Ken Prosser, Derrell Shipes, Tom Swaynham, Mark Hall, Ross Self, Lynn Quattro, Dan Rankin, Tammy Wactor, Lt. Mike Isaacs, Susan Johnson

OTHERS PRESENT:

Douglas Ford (Senator Cromer's office), Ken Kinard, Shawn Kenney, and Joe deMichael from Trout Unlimited (TU)

Chair Hutchins called the meeting to order and thanked Emily Cope and staff for organizing the meeting. The minutes of the April 11, 2012 meeting were approved as submitted.

There were no Advisory Committee Member comments.

LOWER SALUDA RIVER (LSR) TROUT FISHERY:

Ross Self, Chief of Freshwater Fisheries, distributed copies of photographs of trout appearing in the LSR (copy attached to the original minutes). He said staff is about to embark on a three-year study in that area of the river and added they are also working toward a change in trout limits on LSR that would allow anglers to take five fish, with one longer than the specified length. Mr. Self said DNR plans to hold two public meetings in Columbia to allow input from anglers on proposed lengths, which range from 14-18 inches. He noted staff will likely request a recommendation later in the year for a regulation change to protect the larger fish in LSR.

Mr. Self announced that staff continues to evaluate a prohibition on the use of trout as bait and said the agency needs to decide if this should be a state-wide prohibition or one limited to LSR. He stated DNR also needs further clarification on actions Georgia is considering relating to trout as bait and how these actions could affect a state-wide prohibition of this in South Carolina. Mr. Self said DNR plans to incorporate questions on bait and tackle restrictions for LSR into upcoming angler surveys. Self stated staff has heard some discussion in other areas of the state concerning the use of trout as bait for other fish, which is currently allowed. Eliminating the use of trout as bait would impact certain anglers and may prove to be controversial, even though necessary. Staff will continue discussions in this regard.

Regarding the three-year study on LSR, Mr. Self said it will involve the mark and recapture of fish. He noted that Trout Unlimited will provide volunteers to assist with the tagging of trout to be stocked in LSR and they will also assist with the administration and funding of a tag return reward program. Mr. Self thanked members of TU for their partnership and willingness to work with DNR in this effort.

Ken Kinard from TU stated the Saluda Chapter has over 300 members and has issued 100 permits through the homeowners' association allowing members to fish by practicing catch and release if TU waters are accessed. He stated TU is not denying access to these waters, but to do so requires joining the chapter and abiding by the homeowners' association's rules. Mr. Kinard said TU is recruiting new members while seeking better protection of the fish by catch and release.

Committee Member Howard requested that management of small mouth bass be added as an agenda item for a future meeting.

EARLY SEASON MIGRATORY BIRD RECOMMENDATIONS:

Derrell Shipes, Chief of Statewide Projects, distributed copies of the 2012-2013 Migratory Bird Early Season Framework (provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service) and the 2012-2013 Early Migratory Bird Hunting Seasons Staff Recommendation (copies attached to the original minutes). The framework allows an early teal season of September 1 – September 30, with 16 consecutive days allowed during that period, and a maximum daily bag limit of 4 and a maximum possession limit of 8. Mr. Shipes announced the Waterfowl Advisory Committee (WAC) had unanimously approved staff recommendations for an early teal season of September 15 – September 30, with bag limits of 4 and 8 (shooting hours, sunrise until sunset) at their meeting on July 10. He stated staff will present this recommendation to the DNR Board on July 25.

Mr. Shipes said staff also recommended to the WAC (unanimously approved) an early Canada goose season of September 1 – September 30 (allowable framework) with a daily bag limit of 15 and possession limit of 30 (shooting hours ½ hour before sunrise until sunset). A motion was made to adopt staff recommendations for the early teal and Canada goose seasons (as approved by the Waterfowl Advisory Committee on July 10). A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to support staff recommendation/WAC approved early seasons.

Deputy Director Emily Cope stated the late season framework will be available the end of July and staff will present their late migratory bird hunting seasons to the WAC on August 14. She added that WAC approved late seasons will be presented to the DNR Board for approval at their August meeting.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Emily Cope distributed copies of a summary showing new legislative changes that will be included in the 2012-2013 Hunting and Fishing Rules and Regulations (copy attached to the original minutes). She highlighted several of the changes, including the expansion

of night hunting opportunities of feral hogs and coyotes for private landowners; DNR designating free fishing days as July 4th and Memorial day; relocation of Horry County to Game Zone 5; changes to trapping and commercial fur harvest; and an act making it unlawful to hunt migratory waterfowl on Lake Keowee, Broadway Lake and Lake Moultrie (within 200 yards of a dwelling). Ms. Cope stated the legislature has been very willing to work with DNR this year.

Ms. Cope reported most DNR budget items were approved and overall the agency was successful. She said the agency received funds to hire 20 additional law enforcement officers, a cost of living increase for state employees was approved, and money was secured for a new drill rig for the Land and Water Division. DNR items Governor Hailey vetoed included establishing an authority for Lake Paul Wallace and funds for IT Section improvements. Ms. Cope stated vetoed items will be returned to the legislature to determine if they will be upheld or overridden. She announced DNR Director Taylor has requested and received state appropriated budget requests from Deputy Directors for 2013 and noted the division will be requesting funds for endangered species issues, fish hatcheries and state lakes. Ms. Cope added the division currently receives no state appropriated dollars.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Chair Hutchins stated in response to Committee Member Smith's request for a DNR mobile web app, Director Taylor has instructed Don Winslow, Deputy Director of Outreach and Support Services, to pursue this possibility. He said two meetings have been held internally and one with an outside source, so the topic is moving forward. Mr. Hutchins stated he thinks it is a fantastic idea and although there are more pressing IT budget priorities, he will stay on top of the issue.

Committee Member Howard asked for a report at the next meeting on work the Department is doing regarding the feral hog issue. He further stated as a landowner, improvement is necessary.

TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:

Tentative date is October 9, 2012 at the Webb Wildlife Center in Garnett, SC, 11:00 AM.

Committee Member Howard asked that future meeting notices and agendas be emailed to members.

The meeting was adjourned.